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C.K.S.

London, Mar 1920.

THE
POETS IN THE NURSERY

THE POETS IN THE NURSERY

BY CHARLES POWELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY JOHN DRINKWATER

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WITH JOHN LANE'S
COMPLIMENTS

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Fourteen of these parodies are reproduced by kind permission of the Editor and Proprietors of the *Manchester Guardian*, in which paper they appeared. The other six —the Whitman, the two Brownings, the Rossetti, Poe, and Omar Khayyám—appear now for the first time.

C. P.

Introductory Note

COMMON parody, skilled though it be, is a defilement of poetry, and contemptible. It springs rather from resentment than from affection and understanding, being the attack of mere cleverness upon beauty. The jealous touch is unmistakable, and though it may sometimes force a laugh, it is always, for any generous reader, a laugh without comfort. It remains vulgar, lacking the last saving grace of tenderness. But the parodist of fine temper never outrages our love of poetry; indeed, he exercises it, not passionately, but in a very friendly intimacy.

Such a one is Mr Charles Powell, and his

book belongs to the aristocracy of his art. Just as a lover will rally the beloved and yet be fiercely intolerant of an ill word against her, so Mr Powell makes fun of his poets and leaves us assured that he would spare nothing in poetry's defence.

So admirable are these verses that the critic wants to follow the parodist through each, for no better purpose than to exclaim upon their obvious merits. I will merely give myself the pleasure of anticipating the reader, who troubles to wait upon this formality, in a few of his delights. It will be observed that while Mr Powell invariably catches his subject's external manner with easy precision, this is but the beginning of his art. The underlying spiritual force never evades him, and he measures himself successfully against the poet's impulse as well as against its formal expression.

He can recreate not only the elegance of Mr Dobson's muse, but also the secluded fragrance, and under his sensitively humorous figure of Mr Hardy's fibrous verse lies the equivalent of Mr Hardy's sifting intelligence. Here and there, perhaps, as in the Robert Browning and Thompson parodies, the result remains something of a *tour de force*, but in almost every case it rises above this to revelation. Mr Noyes, we cannot but think, would like to have written the poem that is here put to his credit, and the worst that malice can induce Mr Powell to do is to add a distinction to the celebration of Master Tom Tucker that might not have been there had Miss Wilcox really been the poet.

Faithful as the parodist is to his occasion, his work has continual touches of his own personal quality.

> This centre of ravishment
> Teeming with, whatever else, mischance,

owes nothing to Henley's humour, and Sir Henry Newbolt cannot claim the invention, or even the inspiration, of

> Tabby was fretting his sires' heart-strings.

But these notes are never out of key with the main intention. This book, in its own urbane province, has the unity of an accomplished work of art, and it is a book obliquely but truly in praise of poetry. Mr Powell never forgets his fun, but neither does he forget the significance of his poets, and poets are not always so happy even in their more accredited ministers.

JOHN DRINKWATER

THE
POETS IN THE NURSERY

Little Jack Horner

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

THE PANTRY

YULE pies paling in the gloom half-felt,
Don John, the cloisterer, is loosening his belt;
Rare wine wooing with the blushes of the South,
Don John, the cloisterer, is melting in the mouth.
He feels a god-like passion for the plumpest of the plums;
Then a piercing, then a probing, then a pinching, and it comes.

Succulent he rises up to praise the gods who
grant
To sluice with juice of Tuscany the fruitage of
Levant.

Don John, quaffing as the high gods sup,
Sees his merits mirrored in the crescent of the
cup,
Holding his head up as the magic letters leap:

"*Virtue's Counsellor,*
Heaven's own Banqueter" . . .
Don John, the cloisterer,
Is going off to sleep.

Jack and Jill

JOHN MASEFIELD

A WHISTLE shrilled; the farm hands left the
stack;
Down in the byre the bucketeers arose,
Jilly the milkmaid, and the cowherd Jack,
And swung out on the old well path that goes
On to the summit, where the well-shaft shows—
Jack leading with a yodeler's pride of limb,
And Jilly, admiring, lightly following him.

They reached the well, and soon the bucket
brimmed;

But he had turned to the wells her eyelids cover,
And knew he saw there his soul's fellow limned ;
And then, manœuvring to play the lover,
Forgot the bucket, and fell kicking it over.
She leaned to clutch him as he left the level :
She missed. . . . He cracked his crown—and brain, poor devil.

She followed after, more in flight than fall,
Skimming the slope, as swallows skim the mere,
And, lighting softly, stooped, softly to call,
" It's Jilly, Jacky. Speak to Jilly, dear.
Oh, Jacky, little love, he cannot hear."
Sudden there came a crazy laugh : " Oh, chuck it.

It will go on," he said, "I've kicked the
bucket."

And then they took and shut him up in cells,
Where, biding his Sovereign's pleasure and his
own pain,
He kept on kicking buckets filled at wells
And seeing milkmaids clutch at him in vain.
And Jilly murmured, "He will come again."
Whereat the farm hands, pity in their laughter,
"There, too, the simple wench will follow
after."

Little Tom Tucker

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

IT'S easy enough to sing pæans
To a Royal Hotel cuisine,
But the uncrowned king is the man who can sing
To the loaf and the margarine.
For the key to the life is the palate:
Pampered, it starves the soul;
But a life on air and homely fare
Is a life lived high and whole.

The life shows whole, but in segments,
Buttered, the loaf goes down—

In segments made with a Sheffield blade,
Stamped with the King's own crown.
And the whole is but half, lived lonely:
It's a woman's plighted troth
That gives man a wife for the rest of the life
Of the one, or the other, or both.

Ride a Cock-Horse

ALFRED NOYES

IN lilac time (which means in May) I made a
votive holiday
To Youth and Love and Fairyland and
Song and Paradise;
I rode to feast on cakes and milk, the fame of
ancient Banbury,
Served by a barefoot dairymaid—rose lips
and violet eyes.

I passed through lanes of lilac bloom and down
arcades of emerald gloom,

Ride a Cock-Horse

In proud curvet and pirouette and lordly
caracole ;
I pranced to left, I pranced to right, I pranced
through shadow out to light,
A-riding like Napoleon a pony on a pole.

At Banbury, at Banbury, at little cross-crowned
Banbury,
I saw a milk-white palfrey by a crimsoned
page led on ;
And then I saw a blossom-crown, two satin
shoes, a silken gown,
And violet eyes—I knew my maid the
palfrey throned upon.

They'd fitted her with finger-rings, with
emerald, pearl, and opal rings ;

The ruby rings that trembled on her ears,
how bright they rayed!
Like stars along the Milky Way they tricked
and sparked that sunny day,
A-dancing to the belfry on her tiny toes
that played.

The bridle bells took up the chime, and all
the way and all the time
They met a peal of wedding bells—to me
they seemed to toll,
Remembering how forth I'd gone to conquer
like Napoleon . . .
That palfrey showed how puny was a pony
on a pole.

Little Bo-Peep

RUDYARD KIPLING

THERE'S a whimper in the field where a shepherdess has squealed
For her sheep that are off on the run:
"Hi! Rover there, come over, for the flock has quit the clover,
And we've lost them, every one."

You can hear the bleat of the youngest ewe
As she seeks her roving dam;
You can see the tail—how frail! how frail!—
That hangs from the smallest ram.

Ha' done with the tears that are vain,
dear lass,
Cast out the fear that is blind ;
For they'll each come back with a whole
tail, its own tail, its sole tail,
They'll all come home with a Plain Tale
—that a tail it is worn behind.

Hey, Diddle, Diddle

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

ANIMALS ALL

TABBY was fretting his sires' heart-strings
When the enemy spoiled for a fight;
But he sweetly swore by a number of things
He would finish the tune outright.
He was playing a lethal, coronach air
(The doom of enemies many):
"With this," said he, "will I first kill care,
And then, just then, kill Kenny."

Jetty, held fast in the milking gear,
At the milkmaid boomed and frowned :
" Pretty hard pounding, this, my dear,
But we'll see who can hardest pound."
Then cannonading the stool and the pail,
And leaving the maid in a swoon,
She shot through the air the clouds to scale
And measure her horns with the moon.

Toby was playing the pantaloon
And bouncing about on his loins ;
Then he balanced a dish on the bowl of a spoon
And carried it round for the coins.
" At a thousand pound this show's a ' bag ' "
(He was dancing along on his head),
" And though I had never a tail to wag,
I'm Dasched if I'd miss it," he said.

Hey, Diddle, Diddle

Animals all, it is still their day,
And the human wit is a fool;
Animals all, as they play their play
They are putting our wags to school.

Humpty Dumpty

SIR WILLIAM WATSON

THERE'S a lordly shape that employs
The lineage of the spheres
In arrogant power of poise,
Spurning the dust and the tears,
Waiting for thunder or wind
To answer his challenging call,
And prove he has sinned not, as mortals have sinned,
And can fall not, as mortals must fall.

But lo! as he peers for the gaze
Of the venerant sons of men—

Humpty Dumpty

Vainly—o'erreaching, he sways . . .

He totters . . . he topples . . . and then

No more can Apollo's car,

With Apollo as charioteer,

Retrieve the fall of this mock avatar

Than Ceres the fall of the year.

O shapeless lord of conceit,

O most unbodied thing,

I will show thy nature unmeet

For a god or a temporal king.

For I am The Man Who Saw,

When thy brittle body broke,

Half of the oval a yokel raw

And half of the oval a yolk.

Mary, Mary

AUSTIN DOBSON

BECAUSE you were, *Marie, Marie,*
Toujours and *tout à fait contraire,*
Come tell me now, *je vous en prie,*
How does *la belle jardinière?*
This summer here *en Angleterre,*
How runs the Villa's garden code?
Is't *à la guerre comme à la guerre?*
Is't *laisser faire,* or *à la mode?*

Grow you the lovely, *fleur de lis,*
Or the more useful *pomme de terre?*

Mary, Mary

Plain cabbage, or *le bel orchis ?*

Le pois de senteur, or *pois vert ?*

(Forgive, I pray, this *questionnaire.*)

Which have those fair hands delved and hoed—

Jardin potager, or *parterre ?*

Is't *laisser faire*, or *à la mode ?*

Is't *à la mode ! Mon cher ami*,

That letter from *Monsieur le Maire*—

" Grow food, grow food, *pour la patrie* "—

Went straight to light *le luminaire.*

Ma foi ! I'll keep to *mon parterre*,

My shells, bells, columbines, enrowed :

La vie 's more than a food affair ;

Mine's *laisser faire*, not *à la mode.*

Envoy

Dieu ! Tout le monde is *si contraire,*
There'll be no universal code
Until I get to regions where
Sweet *laisser faire* is *à la mode.*

Little Boy Blue

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

"OHONE!" and "O, O, O!" . . . The keening of the vigilant-wise colleen
Dappled the woven silence as vapour spray-dabbles the sky,
Waking the gold-haired stripling in amethyst velveteen,
Under the pinnacled hay where the sun had beguiled him to lie.

"Arouse then, arise and blow now, and blow for sinners three:

An arrowy note for the fleeceling that shepherdless wandered away,
Crossing the circle of cressets the faëries strewed to be
His charm when the spirits of evil came over to snatch their prey.

"And then for the crescent-crowned beauty, the wonder of Lugnagall Fair,
Now battering barriers, trampling the trammelling, ripening blade—
Sister of Conan, Caolte, and Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair—
For her, by the beard of S. Patric, 'Ohone!' in the B-flat played.

"And after, oh, blow for the blower a lingering, penitent din—

The sentinel sleeping on duty, the truant on
Danaän shores—
Or with you will be all the trouble of myriad
years of sin,
With you will be all the trouble of labouring
galley oars."

Old Mother Hubbard

THOMAS HARDY

CHORUS OF RUMOURS

THE famished maw of couchant caninery ;
Dry fangs agape in imminence to close
Without release and indiscriminately
On what shall interpose.

Maternal womanhood, compassionate
For brute as human in his darkling day ;
Age in devotion spry, determinate ;
Forward she foots her way.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Her instinct forwardly is keen in cast,
But here misprised, dupe o' the unweeting
Mind,
Planting too great assurance in the bolts
And bars inviolable of yonder locker.
This expedition has been enterprised
An hour too late.

SPIRIT SINISTER

Who can divine the hour?
Thus does the Great Foresightless show to
men,
In stark disproof of Plan Predestinate
To unimpel so stultifying a move.

THE MOTHER

Sustenance?
And how am I to get him sustenance?
There is no sustenance here. The dog's
foredone
By gluttonous marauders. I know his state,
Shrivelled and nigh to passing. But I see
Likewise that I can bring no sustenance,
And will return and say so.

SPIRIT IRONIC

Bear him away
Into the woods, pine, birch—the skinny
growths,
That can sustain life well where earth affords
But sustenance elsewhere yclept starvation.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

The tears that lie about this plightful scene
Of mortal need and ministry frustrate
Plead yet anew the wryness of the times,
The fatal hazard of a Meatless Day.

(*Curtain of Evening Shades, Sirius shining.*)

Curly Locks

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

MAID with unanademed arch of amber,
Trailing the tremulous tress volute—
Sun the chrysophilite's chosen chamber
For beams that beacon, for shafts that shoot :
My breast, possessed with desire of possession,
Suspires with the sigh that is sign of desire ;
My heart with hope of the whole sole cession
Of you leaps higher.

'Tis mine to give you your grace's guerdon :
No more to scour the scullery scoops,

Or be stung by the steam of the stew to be
stirred on
Till the fingers falter, the drear drudge
droops ;
No more to wade in the welter and wallow,
Sweeping the swarm of swine to the swill ;
But afar to forget, as my sister swallow,
Irk and ill.

Embosomed of billowy broidered pillow,
Deep in the dell of a damask divan
(Woven and girt by Waring and Gillow),
You shall work, you shall play, as you please,
as you plan.
And I will sing you my *Songs after Sunset*
While you in your tapestry turn them to
tints ;

Nor ever shall end our ecstasy once it
Just begins.

For the fruit of the lusciously lush arbutus,
Crimsoning through its chrism of cream
And shower of shimmering sugar, shall mute us
From mortals that are to immortals that seem :
To two beatified beings unbodied,
Who in lessening sense of their presences prove,
As a refluent god to his own high godhead,
Love loves Love.

Three Blind Mice

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

THE mistress of the farm,
And, incidentally, master of the farmer,
Tall, gaunt, square-jawed, and tigress-eyed,
Crafty, malignant, intolerant, inhumane,
A touch of Jael, a tinge of Madame
Defarge,
But Catherine de Medici most of all,
And something of St Athanasius:
Trailing a cord
Baited with cube of Stilton's greenery—
Of finest mettle and fain

To follow of its own volition :—
Glides list-slippered over the flags
On, on . . . still on.

Hist !
Out of the maze and the murk,
The vastitudes of their subterranities,
A triad of grisly mice,
Their eyes set in pitiful occultation,
But steering with unisoned nose
A course as straight as the governing scent is potent,
Thrust whiskers speaking vast expectancy,
And sentient tails foreboding aught but ill,
Sweep fleetly forward, centre and flanks,
And at the now moveless cheese
Halt.

Three Blind Mice

Blind, inly blind ;

Blind, purblind, not to see,

Even while they thus fulfil themselves,

This bounteous source of appetence,

This centre of ravishment,

Teeming with, whatever else, mischance ;

Not to see that they must pay

Every pleasure with a pain.

For sudden a blade,

Blaring,

From out an unwomanly bosom of steel,

And poised in luminous transciency,

Descends,

And, oh, a gruesome world ! without

The thick sweet mystery of chloroform,

Shears through the prone and unforeboding tails,

In triple stroke,

Swift, clean.

O Fate! O Change! O Time!

A spectacle sans parallel:

Brute dwellers in the dark, within, without,

In inaccessibility's despite

Maliciously decoyed,

Scimitared,

Divorced.

Simple Simon

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

"WHERE go your feet so fast, and why,
Mister Pieman?
Tell me: I'm famished and fain to cry."
"They go to the booth that folk may buy,
Little duffer."
(*O stuffer, sorry stuffer,*
Buy you, or beg, or steal for your revels?)

"Then high up on your headed tray,
Mister Pieman,
Are tartlets I would eat alway."

"But hold you coin for such to pay,
Little duffer?"
(*O stuffer, sorry stuffer,*
Pence added to pains is the price of revels!)

"Alas! my love is all my coin,
Mister Pieman:
In that you and your tartlets join."
"Equally? That's all very foine,
Little duffer."
(*O stuffer, sorry stuffer,*
Love you giver as gift for your revels?)

"Ah! but that crinkled crust I see,
Mister Pieman,
Was surely made for such as me?"

"Ay, crinkled as your grammar be,

Little duffer."

(*O stuffer, sorry stuffer,*

Cram Murray as you cram in your revels!)

"Why comes that mocking voice again,

Mister Pieman?

Tell me—or feed me and ease my pain."

"That's the refrain—and I refrain,

Little duffer."

(*O stuffer, sorry stuffer,*

Heed you the moral: refrain from revels!)

Goosey, Goosey, Gander

WALT WHITMAN

I SALUTE the *aplomb* of animals.

I salute them all: I ignore no genus and no species.

Others may despise this species or that genus: I never despise any species or any genus.

But I salute here and now the genus *Anser* of the family *Anatidæ*:

Male and female I salute them—the one as much as the other, for the one is equal to the other.

O you *Anseres*! O you *Anatidæ*!

You and I together compose the cosmic college of the savans.

By some mystic *rapport* you and I are equated: we, ecstatic, coalesce in the divine average.

What you adopted I have adopted; what you gabble I appropriate; it becomes my cantabile.

Duetto we sing; we chant copious; we celebrate the equalities: we hymn the primal sanities.

Experimental drifts!

This is the poem of directions.

I believe the centrifugal is right and the centripetal is right: I reject neither.

I project myself—also I return.

Ascending to the loft, descending to the basement, I, aquest, explore.

I make tremendous entrances and exits.

All these rooms compact—every square inch of these rooms, without excepting a particle—the cat also—the dog also.

I project myself into *la chambre* of *ma femme*.

Of mirrors, cushions, screens, work-boxes, fifth-month flowers, tea-sets, lap-dogs, my amaze.

All femininity, all charities, all sympathies, graces, sweetnesses, and *delicatesse* exsurge from *la chambre* of *ma femme*.

I see scent-bottles, pin-cushions, trinkets, jewel-caskets, autograph-albums, photograph-frames, writing-tablets, stringed instruments, powder-puff, and what not.

I see the fan Japanese.

I see the lace of Malta—I see the shawl of Paisley and of India.

I see the vellum-bound volume of me, the eternal self of me.

How *resumé*!

And then I see in *arrière*, half-emergent from the window-curtains, the paradoxically assertive figure of an old man.

He calls me by my nighest name, and I reply,

"Whoever you are, I do not think you belong here anyhow."

When impudence comes into a place it is not the last to come, nor the third, nor the second to come,

It waits for no one else to come—it is the first.

And when it has come it regards not the sanctions of the place.

His defiant eye fully alerted me.
He would not look at the Stars and Stripes,
would not whistle "Yankee Doodle"!

The cosmos does not argue, neither do I argue:
I make no parley, I stop for no expostulation.
What is it, then, between us?
Whatever it is, it avails not:
Rank avails not, and age avails not.
A bas, desperado!
My hand ahold of his leg—we *vis-a-vis*, my
right hand ahold of his left leg,—
From *la chambre* of *ma femme* emanative,
Precipitant down to the basement descending,
Utterly quelled and subdued, learning his
lesson complete.

The Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe

OMAR KHAYYÁM

SOME for the Patter of Little Feet: and some
Sigh for their Flight to the Nothing whence
they come.
Ah, take the Chance and let the Children go.
Risk any Fate but an eternal Drum.

Lo, that marineless Boat they call a Shoe,
That shelters Me and my Rebellious Crew,
I'd strip it of its leather, potent-tanned,
And potently I'd tan the Children, too.

The Boy no question makes of has his Nose
Been wiped or not, or where the wiper goes.
Ask Him that spheres aloft the Gilded Three:
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

There was the Keyhole that refused the Key:
There was the Pail that set the Water free:
And when I ask, Who bored, who bunged the Hole?
Each renders answer, "Oh, it wasn't Me!"

And when Another of the precious Lot
Is set to make the Water boiling hot,
And round the Pot still Potters, and I say,
"You've let the Pot run dry,"—"Oh, go to Pot!"

Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe

I sometimes think that never tastes so dead
The Broth as when it's eaten sans the Bread:
That every Palm-tree in the Desert bears
A Bough for smiting some young Dunderhead.

A Look of Curses underneath the Bough,
A Juggle, a Whine, no Loaf, but Bed—and thou-
-sand Jackals howling in the Wilderness,
Beside *It*, were as parodies "Miaou!"

Hush-a-bye, Baby

FRANCIS THOMPSON

BLANCH-AMICED, roseal nursling, resupine
In coracle terrene,
Afloat on the aërial hyaline,
Moored to the dominant pine,
Not where its pennoned umbrage spans,
With auspice large and halcyon boon,
Its suppliant visitants,
But where, intemperably higher,
In its immitigable culminance,
Do battailously importune
Solstitial fulgences and spilth of fire,

Hush-a-bye, Baby

Or argent rondure of the plenilune
Perdures in its abashless oculance ;—
Reck not their too obtrusive suit,
But still in you the bruit
Of threne susurral, lachrymosal plain,
That on those dolorosal eyes
Elysian euphrasies
Their mystic, chrismal anodyne may strain.

Else will your chasmèd fears
And uncanonical litany of tears
Provoke the lord o' the chambers of the air
Immeditatably
To loose the couriers now upcurled
Within their closured, lethargied lair,
And bid them fly
Rampant along the margent of the world.

Then will your coracle, keel-even,
Begin to trepidate
And gently lean,
Then oscillate
And so precipitously careen
To land you in the nurseries of heaven ;
Or ever the tenent arboral arm, astrain
Wi' the surgent craft and tempested amain,
Rives, and, precipitatèd,
To yon abysmal bed
You and your coracle, sweet Innocence,
Retrieveless gravitate,
O'erfreighted by the weight,
Gratuitous weight of my magniloquence.

Jack Sprat

ROBERT BROWNING

RUBICOND, spherical dame ;
Pallid and spindle-shanked mate :
Couple for playing the complement game ;
Stomachs for diverse contents of the plate.
Cela revient au même.

So, when the meats come for severance,
Palates go leaping reciprocal.
Matter for swapping, not splitting the difference.—

"Liver's the dainty for making the lip prickle."—

"Bacon for me, take the liver hence."

Dietists put case to quote in

Facts, figures—argue, examine it.

"Faugh! what's the odds, so there's blubber to float in?"—

"Give me the dish with a gammon or ham in it."—

Devil may look to your protein.

Recks paunch your smug carbohydrates?

Notes maw your cant hypophosphates?

Calory tables are all falsified rates:

One law's established, and that's not to cross Fate's:

Rabbits to me are as dried rats.

Well, then, what's issue? No dog's lick—
Bird's peck—surviving the dinner:
Mutual relish demolishes prog slick,
Dame showing fatter, mate thinner.
Lord! what's the worth of your fine connoisseur?
Love you, sir! here is an article truer:
Taste and aversion expressed *en bravoure*.—
Keep your *beau monde*, *dilettante* epicure:
He's your society sinner.

Where are you Going to, my Pretty Maid?

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

"NOT so quickly! Madam! Madam!!
Madam!!! Madam!!!! Whither go you?
For your virginal white vesture and your lovely seraph face
Offer evidence presumptive I should vastly like to know you,
And you'll find me worth the knowing if you'll linger for a space."

"Is your state, then, so transcendent and your wisdom, sir, that, looking

Full upon this rustic vessel and this tripod,
they should fail
To be evidence presumptive my vocation isn't
cooking?
Know the tripod and the vessel are a milk-
ing-stool and pail."

"Madam, not a lack of knowledge, but an eye
alone for beauty
Missed the meaning—missed the presence
—of the implements you bear;
Yet the privilege to watch you, getting so by
heart your duty
That the duty would be beauty, is my pure
and ardent prayer."

"I invite you, Mr? . . . thank you,—to the
shed beyond the meadow:

Not because you please to flatter—try that
rather on the calf;
But that witnessing the labour whereto you
your daily bread owe
Makes your silver-plated speeches too
ridiculous by half."

"I requite you, Madam, duly: but as lineage
plebeian
Is implicit in your answer, I must really
press to know
The estate and antecedents of your father;—
say, is *he* an
Earl, or squire, or bishop?—that is, does he
bank with Coutts & Co.?"

"Ah! sir, you become abstemious: 'eyes
alone for beauty' see me as

Daughter of the lowly born, and so de-
seraphize the face;
And the 'virginal white vesture' takes assoil-
ment when the pasture
'Neath it certifies the mowing of my sire,
who rents the place."

"I confess your being, Madam, daughter of a
son of Adam
Rears a barrier between us over-solid, over-
cold.
Not that I would say—far from it—no re-
source could overcome it:
In your own right, peradventure, great
inheritance you hold?"

"No, sir, plainly, I am heiress only to the pair
of 'cherries'

(Cheeks), of 'rubies' (lips), of 'sapphires'
(eyes), envisaged here you see;
Or had said you saw here, certes, if the
golden-glamour virtues—
Fair estates and vast investments—had
instead been dowered on me."

"Then my nympholeptic stooping clearly fails
of interlooping,
So transcendent *is* my state, and so my
wisdom, Madam, too.
Certes, my way is not your way—leads
to another church's doorway:
Learn that in the social spectrum blood
refracts, not red but blue."

"Soh! you've but anticipated. It were better
to have waited—

Made you very sure that I, sir, had the will
to go your way.
As it is, your overweening 'wisdom' (Sir, I
miss its meaning—
Miss its presence) merely saves me speaking
my eternal Nay."

Little Miss Muffet

EDGAR ALLEN POE

ALONE on a hillock brown-tufted,
Of junket she sat with her bowl,
Of junket her porphyry bowl,
And with silvery spoon never stuffed it,
But gave it a dallying roll
On her tongue—so caressing a roll
That you saw she desired it and loved it
As the ultimate bourne of the soul—
As the gods their ambrosia loved it,
Elysian bliss of the soul.

Little Miss Muffet

She sat with her eyes never lifted
To the trees, or the spires, or the sky—
From her bowl to the clouds in the sky;
And she knew not that over her drifted
A filigree maze that no fly—
No intelligent, circumspect fly—
Would approach if but once he had sniffed it,
But pass it discerningly by—
Would hover around if he'd sniffed it,
But pass it retreatingly by.

And now from his platform the builder
Let down his aërial stair—
The filament spun for a stair;
And as she contentedly filled her
Mouth and was still unaware—
Of builder or maze unaware,

Stepped down and stepped off where he'd
willed, a-
-longside her, extending a pair
Of chelicera—just as he'd willed, a
Horrific and menacing pair.

And he thought: "Her delectable banquet
Absorbs her, admitting no fear—
No haunting or transient fear
Of a skeleton present, with dank wit
Appalling, and chilling the cheer—
Chilling and chasing the cheer;—
That comes and, like Fate, never can quit
Till somebody's queachy and queer—
Like the ghosts and the ghouls never can
quit
Till some victim is qualmish and queer."

Then she, with the fangs on her finger :

" This pressure I sadly mistrust."

And she looked—there was ground for mistrust :—

" Oh, mercy !—oh, let me not linger !

Oh, fly !—let me fly !—for I must."

In terror she spoke, letting sink her

Bowl that it broke in the dust—

In agony shrieked, letting sink her

Porphyry bowl in the dust—

Shards lying shent in the dust.

Sing a Song of Sixpence

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

SIXPENCE, the current coin of Arthur's realm,
Was lodged with Merlin for the bartered wealth
Of a stook of the rye that grew about Shalott,
And a dozen brace of blackbirds from the wood
Not far from Astolat. The corn and the birds
Were rendered to Sir Kay, the Seneschal,
Who bade the fashioners of the meats and drinks
Prepare a kingly dish for the Table Round.

Then on a summer night it came to pass,
When the great banquet lay along the hall,
There followed on the breaking of the crust
A sudden rearing of the beaks within,
A sudden stir in the throats. And all the
birds
'Gan fluting a wild carol after death
And resurrection. This mage Merlin heard
And darkly to the King interpreted :

A nose will make a feast,
A nose will banish drouth,
The nose between her cheeks,
The nose above her mouth.

So read the seer, but none of all the knights
Could half divine the portent of the song,
Until the morrow's sun stood at the zenith,

When all the doom-presaging allegory
Came like a lightning gleam across the mind
Of every knight at Court.

It chanced that day
The King was deep in affairs of the Privy Purse,
And the Queen, rose-bowered, sate taking honey-sweet
From the privily pursèd lips of Lancelot.
A bowshot southward, in the courts of the Queen,
The serving-maid to the Lady of the Robes
Went spreading to the sun and to the wind
Shapes of white samite, hygienic, wonderful.
Sudden a black and downward-darting bird
Carved with his beak her nose at the ivory tip,

And beating upward bore the prize away.
She marvelled, yet nor swooned nor uttered cry,
But swiftly for the healing of her hurt
Ran straight to Merlin. And to her the mage
Showed the bright coin, the source of all her woe,
And swore that in its hazard lay the gift
Of Beauty vindicated, nose restored.
So saying he cushioned the piece on finger and thumb,
In act to spin, and bade the maid declare.

She in that moment made a little song,
And called her song "The Song of Heads and Tails,"
And sang it. Featly could she make and sing.

If tails come up, then downward heads will go;
If heads go downward, only tails will show;
I know not which will up or down, not I.

O, come up heads, for nose with heads will be;
O tails, go down, or curtailed nose for me;
And if a curtailed nose, then let me die.

Then Merlin spun, and he that told the tale
Says that the coin, alighting, came up heads,
But he that told it later whispers tails.

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